Improving Teaching Quality Program

California Postsecondary Education Commission

I don't work to empower the students, I work to let them empower *themselves.*

—Participant in program for teachers of American Indian students

Improving Teacher Quality (ITQ)

California Postsecondary Education Commission

Congress has long recognized the critical role of quality instruction to reach the nation's goal to improve student achievement in K–12 education. Research and student achievement data indicate that teachers who are knowledgeable in their subjects and who teach effectively are essential to reach this goal.

Congress has funded teacher professional development in national elementary and secondary education legislation since 1984. Known for many years as the Eisenhower Professional Development Program, the program focused initially on mathematics and science teaching but later included other academic subjects. The federal program was renamed the Improving Teacher Quality (ITQ) program when it was reauthorized under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001. ITQ continues to provide professional development funding that supports the NCLB goal of providing a highly qualified teacher in every classroom.

The Mission of CPEC

The California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC) was created by state law in 1974 to serve as the planning and policy coordination body for postsecondary education in California. CPEC is charged "to assure the effective utilization of public postsecondary resources . . . and to promote diversity, innovation and responsiveness to student and societal needs." As an independent, nonpartisan statewide body, CPEC:

- Provides comprehensive, timely information on student enrollment, educational outcomes, and other educational policy issues
- Conducts long-range planning and evaluates the long-term needs of the system
- Develops policy recommendations for consideration by the Legislature and the Governor

Federal law requires that CPEC, as the state agency for higher education, administer higher education grants for the Improving Teacher Quality program.

My approach to teaching has changed completely because now I focus on

problem solving

rather than drill and practice.

– Participant in mathematics masters' degree projects

Most ITQ funds are allocated to local K–12 educational agencies (i.e., school districts and county offices of education) on the basis of enrollment and the number of students who qualify for a free or reduced-price lunch. A portion of the funding, however, is reserved for competitive grants to institutions of higher education.

The University of California, The California State University, California Community Colleges, and independent colleges and universities may apply for the grants. ITQ projects help shape professional development in California schools. They create models for improving the quality of instruction that have been replicated nationwide.

Current ITQ projects involve more than 20 institutions of higher education working with local educational agencies and other partners throughout California. These projects will receive more than $16 million in federal funds through 2006 and will benefit:

- 8,530 prospective and current teachers
- 697 schools in 230 K–12 school districts in California
- More than 208,000 students

Since 1986, CPEC has awarded more than $75 million in federal grants for professional development to more than 200 institutions.

Awarding Grants

CPEC awards the Improving Teacher Quality grants through a statewide competition and rigorous review by subject-matter and professional development experts. Federal law, administrative decisions, and local and state needs govern the selection criteria. Funded grants must:

- Include a joint agreement between a school of education, a department within the college of arts and sciences, and a local educational agency.
- Serve high-need schools that have large numbers of students from families below the poverty line.
- Help educators connect their instruction with challenging national and state content standards.

- Reflect current research on a wide variety of teaching and learning methods and styles for a diverse student population.
- Serve teachers and students from historically underserved and underrepresented groups and the needs of English language learners.
- Be sustained, intensive, and of high quality.

In addition to meeting those criteria, grantees must commit to sharing the results so that other educators can use the lessons learned to improve professional development programs. To that end, an independent Assessment and Dissemination Project, administered by the Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities, provides a broader assessment. The team periodically reviews and reports on project outcomes and lessons learned. Scientifically based research projects supported by the team are designed to determine the effect of professional development on teacher practices and student achievement.

The Role of CPEC

CPEC's unique role as the agency responsible for the planning and coordination of state policy for higher education is particularly important to implementing the Improving Teacher Quality program in California.

- CPEC links to all segments of the higher education system—public and private, large and small, degree-granting and vocational, and specialized institutions. It also connects with the state's K–12 system and other state agencies and stakeholders with a role in education.
- CPEC offers support to professional development needs assessment and program design through its research capacity and policy analysis.
- CPEC is an independent voice for higher education within state government and helps to keep the focus on system needs, not the needs of any particular stakeholder.

★ Great ideas,
things that are useful for multiple [grade] levels and ideas that can be used the next day!

– Teacher participant,
MESA program

★ *We received lots of excellent materials and ideas to use with our students. The* sharing *by individual teachers was extremely helpful.*

– Teacher participant,
MESA program

★ *I am grateful for*
experience to dis
issues with teach
cultural backgro
such as this one
a model fo
and cross cultura

– Participant in
of American I

Lessons Learned

Over the past decade, CPEC has identified some guiding principles for the effective professional development of teachers:

- The importance of teachers' prior knowledge and values is acknowledged.
- The curriculum in professional development is directly linked to the practice of teaching.
- The professional development focuses on collective participation in the same grade level, subject, school, or district.
- The programs provide opportunities and adequate time for training, practice, and feedback.
- All teachers are treated in an equitable and professional manner.

CPEC especially seeks to fund projects that have a lasting impact. CPEC-funded projects that achieved sustainability did so by:

- Building networks and relationships
- Focusing on evaluation, communication, and publicity
- Building bridges to additional resources
- Involving all stakeholders
- Practicing collegial leadership
- Emphasizing cost efficiencies

Learning More about ITQ

- Institutions of higher education and local K–12 agencies can explore ITQ programs as a resource for creating and expanding partnerships in educational improvement and professional development.
- Elected and appointed policymakers with ITQ projects in or near the areas they represent can visit projects and learn more about how they contribute to improving teacher quality and student achievement.
- ITQ projects often model innovative and creative approaches that are of interest to news media and community organizations. Project leaders welcome the opportunity to tell their stories.
- Teachers throughout the K–12 system can benefit from ITQ projects in their region or from online resources offered by many projects.

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ers from different
unds. Programs
will provide
or dialogue
l understanding.

program for teachers
ndian students

★ *It's amazing how it's built up our* confidence.

Some of us never thought we had leadership qualities.

– Participant in science teacher project

★ *It is a* professional high *for me, because it is like the best of all worlds, getting to do the things that you love most with people who care about something as much as you do.*

—Teacher participant

Examples of Success

ArtsCore

When art was added to the core A–G course requirements for admission to California's colleges and universities, arts teachers were presented with a challenging opportunity: to develop a curriculum for each of the four arts disciplines that both demonstrated the value of the arts as a core academic subject and met the rigorous standards set forth by the University of California (UC) and the California State University (CSU). Funded in 2000, ArtsCore, a consortium of several Orange County institutions of higher education and local school districts, led the way in meeting these challenges. ArtsCore activities included teacher-leader workshops, summer institutes, school-to-community arts programs, and campus days for students and parents. The activities served more than 100 teachers of 31,000 students in nine districts. Those teachers developed many of the curricular models accepted by the UC and CSU. A Web site and a plan to work with middle school teachers ensure the sustainability of this important work.

Mountain Region Science and Reading Academy

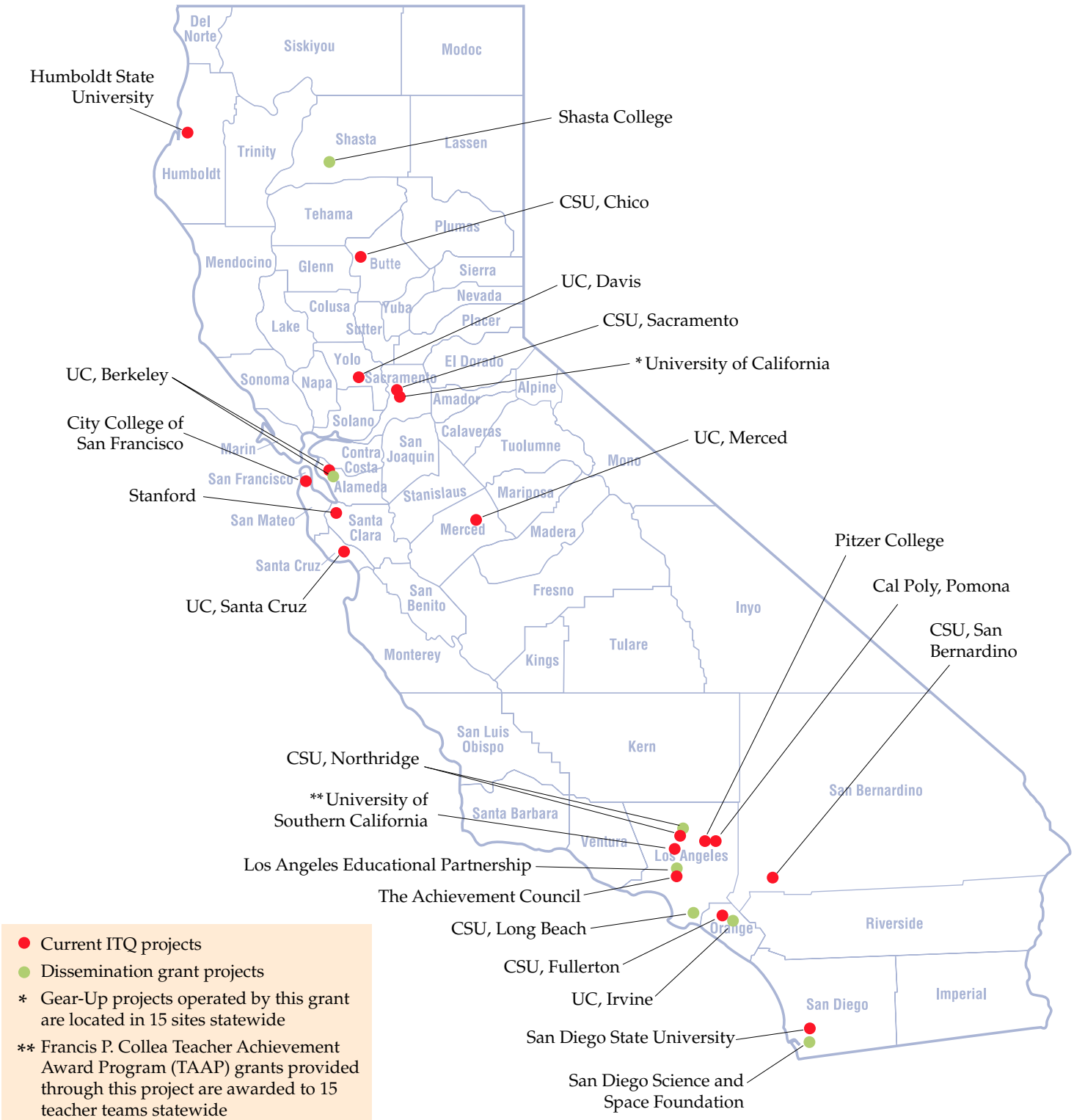
The Mountain Region Science and Reading Academy in the central Sierra Nevada demonstrates that leadership in professional development can be found outside the state's large urban communities. This project is a partnership of the Lawrence Hall of Science at the University of California, Berkeley, and the Tahoe-Truckee Unified School District. For three years the academy has trained more than 190 teachers in seven schools. It implements an integrated inquiry-based, hands-on science and reading program in an elementary summer school and in regular classrooms. More than 4,000 students benefit as the district replicates the teaching model throughout its summer programs and regular classrooms. Teachers say the program helps students master the subject matter and improve their reading through expository writing *about* science. The summer academy model provides an opportunity to build teacher expertise and positively affect student achievement.

★ Professional Development Resources Online: Mathematics

The vision of the Professional Development Resources Online: Mathematics project (PD-ROM) is to make effective use of technology to strengthen mathematics teaching. It involves a statewide partnership of universities and local educational agencies led by California State University, Fullerton, and the Orange County Department of Education. PD-ROM creates a Web site for structured lesson plans, including videos of lessons being taught. Teachers who sign up can access the Web site at any time and find lesson plans and models of instructional strategies to help students master mathematics concepts. The project provides direct assistance through online facilitators, enabling teachers to move at their own pace in completing the modules and replicating the lessons in their own classrooms. A unique aspect of the project is the collaborative development of the Web platform with the Butte County Office of Education that allows the Web site to be tailored to teachers' needs. The project serves more than 350 teachers in 16 schools and benefits thousands of students.

★ Mission Science Workshop of San Francisco

The Mission Science Workshop of San Francisco is an example of a project still successful after more than a dozen years, one that has inspired local science centers in communities throughout the U.S. In 1991, Dan Sudran, an electrical technician at City College of San Francisco (CCSF), persuaded the college to begin an experimental neighborhood youth program to spark interest in science among children in the low-income Mission district. Supported by a Title II grant and National Science Foundation funds, the project is a partnership between CCSF, San Francisco State University, the San Francisco Unified School District, and the Exploratorium. What started as an after-school, hands-on science program has evolved into a major effort serving more than 600 children a week at the original site and satellite sites in schools throughout the region. The Mission Science Workshop provides teachers with significant training in science and classroom instructional strategies.



- Current ITQ projects
- Dissemination grant projects
- * Gear-Up projects operated by this grant are located in 15 sites statewide
- ** Francis P. Collea Teacher Achievement Award Program (TAAP) grants provided through this project are awarded to 15 teacher teams statewide

Information on the ITQ program and the Request for Proposal process can be found online at *www.cpec.ca.gov/FederalPrograms/TeacherQuality.asp* or by calling the California Postsecondary Education Commission, Improving Teacher Quality Program, at (916) 323-4016.

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